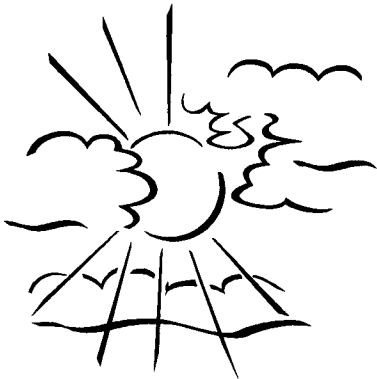


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*Important story at this spot

Articles in Today's Clips

Monday, May 22, 2006

(Be sure to maximize your screen to read your clips)

TOPIC	PAGE
*Child Abuse/Neglect/Protection	2-15
Health Care	16-20
Domestic Violence	21-22
*Juvenile Justice	23-26
Elder Abuse	27
Heating Assistance	28-32
Day Care	33
Courts	34-36
Caseloads	37

Published May 20, 2006

Pair face murder trial in death of 2-year-old boy

Prosecutors say boy had burns, crushed hand

By Kevin Grasha
Lansing State Journal

When 2-year-old Jalyn Daniel died last year, he had burn marks on his feet, the bones in one hand were crushed, and there were signs of internal hemorrhaging.

"This child had a clear, pattern imprint of a household iron on his back and buttocks,"

Assistant Prosecutor Bill Crino said Friday during closing arguments at a preliminary hearing.

The injuries were the result of abuse, Crino said.

Jalyn's mother Cynthia Daniel, 30, and her former live-in boyfriend, Samuel Courtland, 31, will stand trial for Jalyn's murder, Judge Louise Alderson ruled in Lansing District Court.

Both are charged with open murder and first-degree child abuse. Courtland also faces a second-degree child abuse charge; he is accused of beating another of Daniel's children. The pair face life in prison without parole if convicted.

Daniel held her head in her hands, weeping and occasionally turning away from Crino as he detailed the evidence against her and Courtland, who at times sobbed.

Jalyn's official cause of death was pneumonia, but testimony from medical experts indicated it was brought on by complications from blunt-force trauma.

Prosecutors said Courtland beat the child, while Daniel ignored what was happening.

"Cynthia Daniel trapped her children in the lethal hands of Samuel Courtland," Crino said.

Last May, Jalyn was found not breathing in his mother's Grovenburg Road home.

Family friend Lillian Martin testified Friday that when she and Cynthia Daniel returned from a Mount Pleasant casino in the early morning hours of May 13, 2005, Jalyn was moaning and his breathing was "lethargic."

Martin said she heard Courtland tell Daniel not to take Jalyn to the hospital, because if she did, they would take him away.

The next day, police received a 911 call of a child not breathing.

By the time Jalyn arrived at a local emergency room, Crino said, all four limbs were in full rigor mortis. That indicated he had been dead for hours.

"They left this child to die a slow and painful death in his bed," Crino said, adding that Daniel did not ride in the ambulance with the boy.

Testimony from Daniel's other two children indicated Courtland beat Jalyn,

Crino said. A 9-year-old child described being tied up and whipped by Courtland.

Crino said Daniel would turn up the radio to drown out the cries of her children.

The state removed Jalyn's siblings from the home last year.

"The child suffered terrible injuries, but it certainly was not my client who inflicted those injuries," said Daniel's attorney, Eric Tomal.

He said the facts supported only involuntary manslaughter charges against his client.

Courtland's attorney, Peter Samouris, said testimony showed Courtland was not around six of the last 10 days of Jalyn's life.

"If my client wasn't around, how could he commit the crime?" he said.

Contact Kevin Grasha at 267-1347 or kgrasha@lsj.com.

Monday, May 22, 2006

Ind. inmate denies child killing role Prisoner claims troubled, vindictive son told police he was the Oakland County Child Killer.

Francis X. Donnelly / The Detroit News

WESTVILLE, Ind. -- An Indiana prisoner is scoffing at his son's claims that he might be the Oakland County Child Killer and is offering to give DNA, take a polygraph or do whatever else authorities want.

Law enforcement officials also doubt that inmate Michael Grant was involved in the notorious case where four children were plucked from county streets and killed in the mid-1970s.

Grant said the accusation is the latest of several outlandish charges by his son in a bid to keep him in prison.

"It's getting ridiculous," he said last week during an interview at Westville Correctional Facility. "I'll take a polygraph on this or anything else he says."

Investigators became interested in talking to Grant about the child killings in April after being contacted by his son, Chip St. Clair, who said a family trunk contained baby teeth and locks of hair he said could belong to other children.

Grant said the items are family mementoes from St. Clair and that his son is making the spurious charges because he's angry about a bizarre childhood where Grant hid his true identity and dark past from his son.

St. Clair was 22 in 1998 when he learned his dad's real name and that he had been a fugitive for a quarter of a century. Grant had escaped from an Indiana prison after being convicted of manslaughter for striking his girlfriend's 3-year-old son, fracturing his skull.

St. Clair, who learned the truth from Grant's sister, promptly notified authorities and Grant was returned to prison. Grant had been living in Oakland County at the time. His son still lives there.

The son, who rejected his father's surname in favor of the false name under which he was raised, said he wasn't trying to punish Grant by linking him to assorted crimes and misdemeanors.

He said his father is a sociopath who he truly believes could be involved in other murders.

"I don't have anger," he said. "I have pity for him."

This isn't the first time St. Clair has tried to interest authorities in his father's possible involvement in a death.

He is trying to get Indiana officials to reopen a 1968 case where an 18-month-old boy died of sudden infant death syndrome. Grant was dating the boy's mother at the time.

St. Clair also convinced the Indiana Parole Board to rescind his father's parole in 1999.

Interrupting preparations for his wedding, he appeared before the parole board, describing a harrowing childhood where his father tossed him into a frigid Lake Michigan and once hung him from the 20th floor of a high-rise.

"He's a brutal, cruel person," St. Clair had said. "He's kind of like a bully but taken to a level of unbelievable proportions."

Grant said it's a pack of lies, that he worshipped his son, that he was so afraid of running afoul of the law as a fugitive that he never even received a parking ticket.

After publicity about the Oakland County Child Killing case in April, Grant, 65, was placed in solitary confinement for his own protection, a prison spokeswoman said.

After being contacted by St. Clair, authorities planned to question Grant about the Oakland County case in April but postponed the visit because the prison was concerned that media attention might rile inmates.

The investigators still plan to interview Grant, but said the matter isn't urgent.

Sgt. Garry Gray, a Michigan State Police detective, said Grant isn't a suspect and that he doesn't match the modus operandi of the Oakland County killer.

Grant's victim was a 3-year-old boy he had known who was killed during a moment of anger. The four Oakland victims, whose ages ranged from 10 to 12, were methodically abducted and killed by an apparent stranger. Three were smothered, and the other one shot in the face.

"Just the fact that there's a slight, slight, slight, slight possibility, I would be remiss as an investigator not to look into it," Gray said. "He's someone we eventually will clear from the radar screen."

The detective said his interest in Grant stems from the fact that he had lived in Oakland County at the time of the killings in 1976 and 1977. He, his son and his common-law wife lived in a Southfield apartment while Grant worked as a foreman at an auto parts plant in River Rouge.

Grant, who hasn't given interviews in past stories about his son, said he decided to do so now to set the record straight.

He said his failure to tell St. Clair the truth about his past has sent his son into an emotional tailspin.

"I understand him hating me," he said. "He has grief that few people experience. God knows what's in his mind."

Monday, May 22, 2006

State task force pores over child killer tips Detectives believe one good lead will identify slayer of four Oakland County kids in 1970s.

Mike Martindale / The Detroit News

OAK PARK -- Tips about the Oakland County Child Killer, from the bizarre to the most promising, have led detectives to prisons, hospitals and even a Wyoming cemetery.

The case of four killings police say were done by the same person in a 13-month period from 1976 to 1977 continues to haunt Metro Detroiters.

Michigan State Police Detective Sgt. Garry Gray, assigned to renew task force efforts in February 2005, said some recent, well-publicized leads have led to dead ends but Gray is optimistic that the 30-year-old case is solvable.

"There have been more than 20,000 tips come in since the late 1970s," Gray said.

"And since we started back up, we've received between 350 and 400 more. All it takes is one good lead."

State police crime labs are examining DNA evidence from the victims' clothing for comparison with known criminals.

At any given time, investigators are chasing down a half-dozen leads, said Gray. He said some recent news reports involving an arrested Lincoln Park man and an unnamed out-of-state suspect are "barking up the wrong tree."

"We get people who have always believed a relative, co-worker or neighbor was the Oakland County Child Killer," Gray said. "You have to be careful not to repeat efforts, and you have to be methodical."

One current lead involves a 60-year-old Cleveland man who came to their attention after an interview earlier this year with Richard Lawson of Detroit, who was awaiting trial for a 1989 murder in Livonia. Officers also spent several months pursuing a possible pedophile ring operating out of Detroit's Cass Corridor that centered on Lawson and others.

"There is always another person of interest," Gray said. "We just have to find the right one."

The state police Metro North Post can be contacted at (248) 584-5755.

You can reach Mike Martindale at (248) 647-7226 or mmartindale@detnews.com.

May 22, 8:43 AM EDT

Police say little chance Indiana prisoner is Oakland child killer

DETROIT (AP) -- There is very little chance that an Indiana prison inmate is the Oakland County child killer, an investigator says. The prisoner says he is innocent of the deaths.

Michael Grant said the accusation is part of his son's effort to keep him in prison.

"It's getting ridiculous," Grant told The Detroit News last week at Westville Correctional Facility. "I'll take a polygraph on this or anything else he says."

Earlier, Michigan authorities said they hoped a check of Grant's DNA might help them solve the killings of four Oakland County children in 1976-77. But state police postponed a planned meeting with Grant and now say there is no rush to have one.

State police Sgt. Garry Gray said Grant is not a suspect and does not match the techniques of the Oakland County killer.

"Just the fact that there's a slight, slight, slight, slight possibility, I would be remiss as an investigator not to look into it," Gray said. "He's someone we eventually will clear from the radar screen."

Grant, who was convicted of beating his girlfriend's 3-year-old son to death in 1970, was living in Michigan when the Oakland County killings took place, Gray has said.

Eleven-year-old Timothy King, 12-year-old Mark Stebbins, 12-year-old Jill Robinson and 10-year-old Kristine Mihelich were abducted from business areas in Oakland County and found suffocated. Two had been raped, and one also was shot in the face with a shotgun.

Information from: The Detroit News, <http://www.detnews.com>

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Monday, May 22, 2006

Attorney wants donations for Yost appeal

Supporters of Donna Yost, the Bay City woman who in April was convicted of murder in the 1999 death of her 7-year-old daughter, Monique, hope to channel an "outpouring of public support" into \$30,000 for her appeal.

Yost now sits in the Bay County Jail. Her attorney, Edward M. Czuprynski of Bay City, announced a community fundraising campaign on Monday that will involve cans placed at area businesses and other buildings.

Czuprynski laid out 10 reasons he and other say Yost was denied a fair trial, including an expert toxicologist for the defense that the judge didn't allow to testify.

So far, about 10 of 200 cans are out and \$3,000 has been raised, supporters said.

Most of the money came from two, \$1,000 checks presented to the "Donna Yost Appeal Fund" by Stas and Felicia Yascolt of Pinconning and Neal and Debi Graveratte of Linwood.

Czuprynski said the drive also is seeking volunteers, and those interested can call his office at 894-1155.

MICHIGAN

Oakland to take on child abusers

May 22, 2006

BY KATHLEEN GRAY AND JACK KRESNAK
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITERS

Oakland County wants to beef up its child abuse prosecution after an increase in complaints during the last five years.

The sagging economy, easy access to explicit sex on the Internet and greater awareness of inappropriate behavior are leading to more child abuse and neglect complaints, officials said last week.

Since 2000, complaints investigated by the Oakland County Prosecutor's Office have nearly doubled to 653 in 2005. Wayne and Macomb counties have not had similar spurts. Oakland County Chief Deputy Prosecutor Deborah Carley has proposed moving six positions, including two attorneys, to the juvenile division, to handle the increased caseload.

She would close the prosecutor's economic recovery unit, which goes after cash, goods and bonds forfeited by criminals, and transfer those responsibilities to attorneys in other divisions.

The Oakland County Board of Commissioners is expected to approve the reorganization plan Thursday.

"We are seriously overburdened," Carley said. "But what I find even more disturbing is the severity of the cases we're seeing."

At CARE House, a Pontiac agency that interviews and counsels victims of child abuse, neglect and sexual assault, the caseload also has grown.

Between 2003 and 2005, the number of children it helped jumped from about 600 to more than 1,100, said Cindy Bridgman, director of intervention and treatment at CARE House.

A big reason, she said, is the Internet. Child abusers don't have to face the embarrassment of going into a store and buying pornographic magazines; they can go on explicit Internet sites and sometimes follow up with children.

Carley said Oakland County's increases are due, in part, to the prosecutor's efforts to train teachers and police to spot and report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect.

Contact KATHLEEN GRAY at 313-223-4407 or kgray@freepress.com.



WHOM TO CALL

- To report suspected child abuse or neglect, call your county Department of Human Services. These numbers are answered 24 hours a day:

- **Wayne:** 313-963-6006

- **Oakland:** 248-975-5010

- **Macomb:** 586-412-6109

- **Monroe:** 734-243-7400

- **Genesee:** 810-760-2222

- **Washtenaw:** 734-481-9110

- **Livingston:** 517-546-8668

Child Was Looking For Mom, Dad

POSTED: 7:37 am EDT May 22, 2006

UPDATED: 8:33 am EDT May 22, 2006

DETROIT -- The parents of a 4-year-old boy who was found wandering early Monday morning on Detroit's east side have been located.

The boy was discovered at about 4:30 a.m. in the area of Gratiot Avenue and Fordham, Local 4 reported. Two men found the boy and took him to the eastern district police station.

Police said the boy called himself "R.J." and "Rashawn." He was taken to Detroit's Child Abuse Unit.

The boy was staying at his grandmother's house and left in the middle of the night to find his parents, Local 4 reported.

The parents saw the boy on television and notified police. They were heading to the police station to pick up their son.

Police said no charges will be filed in the incident. Officers remind parents that children at 4 years of age should be taught their full name and address.

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Man guilty in assault on girl

Saturday, May 20, 2006

By Steven Hepker
shepker@citpat.com -- 768-4923

A former Blackman Township resident faces up to five years in prison for attempting to sexually assault a 5-year-old girl last winter, his second child-sex conviction.

Timothy Watson, 46, pleaded guilty Friday to assault with intent to commit second-degree criminal sexual conduct. Circuit Judge Edward Grant will sentence him June 29.

Prosecutors will drop a first-degree criminal sexual conduct charge in exchange for the plea.

Assistant Prosecutor Allison Bates said the psychological state of the 5-year-old victim figured in the decision not to go to trial on the rape charge.

The outcome was similar to Watson's previous sexual assault in Berrien Township, in west Michigan. He pleaded guilty in 1997 to assault with intent to sexually penetrate a 9-year-old girl.

He served the full eight-year sentence and was released from prison Dec. 23. Watson moved into a Lansing Avenue house rented by the 5-year-old girl's mother.

The relationship between Watson and the victim's mother is not clear. Initially, she told investigators he was a stranger who knew her landlord, and the landlord had invited him to live at the house.

When Watson left to see his dying brother in Tennessee, the girl told her mother he had been touching her and had sex with her. She told Blackman Township investigators Watson bought her Barbie dolls and took her for fast food when they were alone.

Watson was arrested in Tennessee in late February and was extradited to Jackson County a month later.

METRO DETROIT

Child porn suspect felt torn between 2 worlds

One involved God, church; the other a desire for teen boys

May 21, 2006

BY JACK KRESNAK
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Torn between his spiritual love of God and his erotic love of pubescent boys, Kenneth Gourlay turned to the Internet.

Beginning in 1999 when he was a student at the University of Michigan, Gourlay shifted between two worlds -- the world of his campus-based church and the virtual world of child pornography that he found readily available on the World Wide Web.

"The biggest struggle for me lately is trying to cope with my sexual desires," Gourlay, now 28, wrote in a computerized diary in August 2000. "Unfortunately, I don't know what to do besides wait for God to finish."

Gourlay's diary was found on a deleted document police uncovered from a computer hard drive seized during a search of Gourlay's home in Detroit early last week. Special Assistant Attorney General Douglas Baker read portions of the diary into the record at a bond-reduction hearing for Gourlay late Thursday in 14A District Court in Ann Arbor. Gourlay is charged with 10 felony counts related to child pornography and molestation of a minor in the city in 2001. The maximum penalty on any of the charges is 20 years in prison.

The minor, Justin Berry, has testified before a congressional committee about the hidden world of children who are sexually abused and exploited for the entertainment of paying customers who can watch it live on the Internet. Berry, 19, created a national stir when he testified that he was enticed into the Internet sex trade, lured to Ann Arbor and molested by Gourlay.

In diary excerpts written between 1999 and mid-2001, Gourlay appears undecided between becoming a minister with a campus-based, nondenominational Christian church and pursuing his growing fascination with the world of Internet pornography, where he found images of youths engaging in sexual activities.

Gourlay also discusses the beauty of various boys he has seen either at church or in a Saline school where he worked part-time on computer operations and apparently did some student teaching.

"God, I love 13-year-olds," he wrote on Feb. 11, 2001.

"Anyway, back to my frustrations," a Jan. 11, 2000, entry reads. "Not that" a named boy "is a huge problem for me, but I just think it might be better to get some of my thoughts out. Damn, I might have to pin him down so I can find out how cute those eyes really are. ... Alas, not for me. Maybe someday."

Baker said the entries show Gourlay wrestling with the idea of giving in to his sexual urges, despite the potential problems.

"I prayed and I read, and I prayed and I reasoned," an April 2000 entry reads. "I came to the controversial yet definite conclusion that any activity would be acceptable as long as he initiated it, understood the consequences ... and it remained unlikely that anyone ... would know about it."

If he did engage in sex with a child and were found out, Gourlay reasoned, disaster loomed.

"It's frightening to me how ... people would react to these sorts of secrets of mine, judging by comments dropped in conversation. I feel people whom I consider friendly relations could easily end up slitting my throat in anger and disgust if they knew what I was thinking."

Gourlay's attorneys, James Rasor and James Howarth, are asking District Judge J. Cedric Simpson to lower Gourlay's \$500,000 bond. Simpson is to rule on the request Monday. Six of Gourlay's family members, including his 86-year-old grandmother, and four friends who knew him when he attended New Life Church testified that he could be safely released into the community.

All of the witnesses said they were shocked by the allegations. They called Gourlay a responsible "man of his word" who would not try to flee the state if freed pending trial. Darren Jones, 38, of Ypsilanti Township said he met Gourlay as a U-M student and later as a New Life Church member. Jones said that in some church group meetings Gourlay talked about the possibility that he was gay, but never said he was attracted to minors. A cousin, Brian Morrison, 20, of Grosse Ile, noted that Gourlay had gone to Washington, D.C., last month to appear before a House Energy and Commerce subcommittee investigating Berry's claims of child pornography and the Internet, and could have run away at any time.

At the April 4 hearing, Gourlay invoked his Fifth Amendment right and declined to respond to testimony from Berry, who said that at age 13, he was lured into the Internet child pornography business by men who found his Web site and liked what they saw. During his testimony, Berry, of Bakersfield, Calif., said Gourlay used his computer processing business, Chain Communications, to set up a second Web site for Berry in 2001 that included a method of processing payments from customers. Berry said that when he was 14, Gourlay arranged to bring him to a summer computer camp for high school students at U-M and molested him at his home in Washtenaw County. Jones said Gourlay introduced Berry to several church members on at least one Sunday in 2001. Jones and others said the church did not have a youth program at that time and that Gourlay did not counsel or teach children for the church.

Gourlay drifted away from the church two or three years ago and moved to the home he purchased on West Grand Boulevard in Detroit.

At Thursday's hearing, Rasor advised Gourlay's grandmother, Pauline Gourlay, to go home because Baker was about to read disturbing excerpts from her grandson's diary. She would not leave.

"He's my loving grandson," she said earlier as a witness.

As he was led away in shackles, Gourlay turned to her and mouthed, "Thank you."

Contact JACK KRESNAK at 313-223-4544 or jkresnak@freepress.com.

Medicare drug plan is costly, confusing

Detroit Free Press Letters

May 21, 2006

I am 65 years old and gratefully enjoy good health with little need for prescription drugs. My annual expenditure for prescription drugs is around \$250. After much research, I've learned that annual premiums for drug coverage would far exceed that annual expenditure and it makes no sense for me to participate in this plan. Yet, should the time come when my needs change, I am to be penalized both by a wait for coverage and an exponential premium increase for each month I delay in enrolling. I've never seen a more punitive and complicated plan in my life. My research also revealed that the insurance companies will do everything in their power to substitute the absolutely cheapest drug for what your physician may have ordered.

Americans must wake up to the blatant fact that this is nothing more than a payback to the pharmaceutical and insurance companies.

Pat Nader

Farmington Hills

Don't extend deadline

I disagree with your May 17 editorial "Medicare Mess: People should not face penalty for missing deadline." You stated the deadline should have been extended. I ask, why? The media focused on the deadline for more than a year. The Medicare-eligible population (of which I am one) was bombarded with mail regarding the different programs.

Yes, it is confusing, but there were a significant number of workshops being held to offer assistance, which were poorly attended. The problem lies with the people procrastinating until the bitter end and who will continue to drag their feet if the deadline is extended. I say don't extend.

Marion McCarthy

Harper Woods

It's all about profits

It is time for Congress to admit that the new Medicare prescription plan is a veiled attempt to force elder citizens into the clutches of the pharmaceutical lobby that designed this legislation. Why else is there a financial penalty imposed to force people to succumb to the whims of medical insurance companies who are free to change policy provisions without any penalty on their part? Why can't this program be simply administered by Medicare, whose overhead costs are 28% less than insurance companies, whose main goal is a profit?

Congress must work for the people, not the corporate lobbies. Our representatives must drop the sign-up penalty, cut out the pharmaceutical middlemen, let Medicare administer the plan, and regulate drug prices as is done in every other major industrialized country. The health of the nation is not something to be privatized and manipulated for corporate profit.

Walter Sobczak

Novi

Enrollment a rigmarole

I did it. I enrolled in the Medicare prescription plan May 15. My journey involved two trips to Services for Older Citizens for help, several searches on my dial-up computer service, two trips to the public library to use the faster computer connection, and several calls to plans and pharmacies.

Despite my resentment at the complexity involved compared with the government's Veterans Administration prescription program, I decided to sign up. Then came the realization that come Nov. 15, I will have only six weeks to go through the same rigmarole as plans change the premium and the drugs they cover and as my prescriptions may change.

The bureaucracy to administer this program must be a Rube Goldberg design, and it is unnecessarily expensive.

Ann Kondak

Grosse Pointe Wood

Social worker is never sure what the day will bring

BY Mardi Suhs, Cadillac News

May 22, 2006

CADILLAC - Sheri Sheese grew up in a small town in Indiana and attended Purdue University. She graduated with a degree in social work.

Although a focused and directed professional woman who juggles a full time job at Mercy Hospital Cadillac with her own private practice, in college she was known for her love of basketball.

As a student at Purdue University, Sheese was the manager of the women's basketball team. During her tenure of organizing practices and equipment for the Boilermakers, she traveled with the team to the NCAA Sweet 16 finals tournament.

She said her job for the team was to "take care of everything."

"That was the beginnings of my social work," Sheese stated. "My path is to help people as they are going through change."

As a clinical social worker, what are your responsibilities at Mercy Cadillac?

There are three components to my job at Mercy. First, I do behavioral health assessments and referrals. Secondly, I do medical social work, including discharge planning for patients that might need home health care, special equipment or nursing home placements. Thirdly, I work with employee assistance, a program that allows employees to seek out information about counseling or referrals for their own personal needs.

How did you prepare yourself academically for this position?

Through college I majored in psychology and was interested in working with children. I started my career focus with adolescents in the foster care system and I worked in an adolescent addiction treatment center.

Next I worked with the juvenile courts and foster care and adoption. My clinical skills then expanded to working with adults and I got a master's degree in social work at Grand Valley State University.

Describe a day in your life at the hospital.

Working in the hospital you are not always sure day-to-day what experiences you will have. The patients change and the family needs change but because of the vast experiences I have, hopefully I can help the person I come in contact with.

Two days of the week my primary focus is patient-related, meaning I am completing social work assessments for people who come into the hospital for medical needs and follow-up with their discharge planning needs.

The other days of my week I utilize my time for employee assistance activities and organizational activities.

How do you assist Mercy employees?

Employee assistance is designed to be very short term. It can be anything from using my social work knowledge for a referral to any agency. Maybe an employee has an elderly mother in need of home care assistance. I have the resources to assist them.

Or maybe an employee is struggling with a mental health or stress management issue or a conflict at home. They are looking for some support and for direction and information.

What is the most fulfilling aspect of your work?

I enjoy the interaction with people and not knowing for sure what the day might entail. I enjoy seeing a positive outcome on people's faces. I enjoy just having a patient say thank you for helping me or having a family member say thank you for helping me with my mothers' needs because the person didn't know what services are available.

I think it is part of my personal process for me to help people with their needs. And there are times when people are in crisis and it is part of my training to provide crisis intervention.

In addition you maintain a private practice. Tell me about that.

I enjoy working with people who have had mental health or substance abuse issues. And I enjoy working with adolescents.

In my private practice I enjoy the clinical aspect of counseling and working with people. I've always had a vision in my mind to have my own business and practice.

Virus spreads through assisted-living centers

Saturday, May 20, 2006

By John Tunison
The Grand Rapids Press

HOLLAND -- A virus apparently sickened some residents at two assisted-living centers and up to 14 workers at Holland Hospital in recent days, but now has dissipated, Ottawa County health officials said.

Health Department officials early this week sent "health alert" notices about a norovirus to all of the area's assisted living facilities as a precaution.

Dr. Paul Heidel, the county's health director, said no new cases have been reported in the last few days and he suspects any transmission is done.

A norovirus, usually producing flu-like symptoms for a day or two, often starts when someone eats or drinks fecally contaminated food or water. It can then spread by person-to-person contact. Noroviruses are usually very contagious.

Heidel said an illness outbreak at the Ottawa County Jail on Wednesday is unrelated. There, authorities suspect food contamination.

Health officials say the best way to prevent and contain a norovirus is to wash hands often and stay home if you are ill.

Health officials learned last week that several people fell ill at a Holland-area assisted-living center. Tests showed it was a norovirus. Heidel would not name the center.

On Monday, health officials learned of seven or eight illnesses at another home last week, but the report came too late to collect lab samples.

At Holland Hospital, 14 employees called in sick with a suspected norovirus Tuesday and Wednesday, hospital spokesman Tim Breed said. He said doctors suspect a patient may have had a norovirus that spread to employees.

Send e-mail to the author: jtunison@grpress.com

Well-intentioned domestic abuse bills contain pitfalls

Web-posted May 22, 2006

EDITORIAL

A series of presumably well-intentioned bills currently in the Michigan Legislature are being touted as helping victims of domestic abuse.

House Bills 1177-1181 and 5879-5883, as well as House Bill 5267, have some strong support in Lansing, including two Oakland County legislators who are among the sponsors. Rep. Shelley Goodman Taub, R-West Bloomfield, is leading the drive on House Bill 5883 while Rep. Fran Amos, R-Waterford, is sponsoring House Bill 5881.

However, the bills have drawn the attention and concern of domestic abuse advocates such as Beth Morrison, president and CEO of HAVEN in Pontiac, a local domestic abuse shelter.

She said she feels the legislation may have some unforeseen pitfalls.

"Although we can appreciate that the Legislature is attempting to address issues of domestic violence - it's important to note these issues are complex and need to be closely examined," Morrison said. "The legislators need input from experts in the field."

There are two aspects of the bills that particularly raise red flags.

One concerns a regulation that requires pregnant victims of domestic abuse who seek abortions to be asked if they are being coerced into having the procedure. If so, the abortion is delayed at least 24 hours.

Morrison says that usually it's the opposite case. An abusive spouse wants the woman to have a baby so that he can maintain a connection and possibly have greater control over her. So, the 24-hour delay could mean another day of abuse.

Also, the regulation puts physicians and other health care workers who are trying to help victims at greater risk of prosecution because they may be violating the law if questions and comments are not phrased properly.

Also, there is a regulation requiring joint custody of children.

"This raises the level of danger for those families experiencing domestic violence," explained Morrison. "The law requires a judge to have clear and convincing evidence of a parent being unfit to take away his parental rights. But this can be a difficult thing to prove."

"Meanwhile, often the case in domestic abuse is that children are used as tools by the abuser to keep the wife or woman connected to him. Sometimes, the child could be the object of abuse himself."

Morrison said the abortion and custody regulations aren't needed because current laws cover those issues, and the new regulations could complicate the lives of those in abusive situations and the professionals trying to help them.

She again stressed that domestic violence issues are complex and there are no simple solutions.

Lawmakers need to move cautiously and consult with experts in the field, Morrison said.

"We're glad they interested," she said. "We're glad they see domestic violence needs work but we hear the victims' stories and we hear about their fears and we know which needs of theirs should be considered."

Obviously, helping victims of domestic abuse should be a top priority at all levels of government and society, but some care needs to be taken to make sure the laws truly relieve suffering and don't cause more pain.

THE OAKLAND PRESS

Published May 21, 2006

Highfields: Regaining state license a positive step; keep up momentum

A Lansing State Journal editorial

Highfields Inc. has a provisional license from the state to reopen its residential program for troubled youth. That's good news for the Onondaga facility, for the youth it aims to serve and for the people of mid-Michigan who rely on such work.

But the job of reform and confidence-building isn't done for Highfields. The course looks good; the destination is not yet reached.

On Wednesday, state officials extended a six-month license to Highfields, which had lost state sanction following investigations into staff mistreatment of youths under their charge.

Those incidents also had led Ingham County judges to withdraw youth they had sent to the facility for counseling.

The situation was grim. The troubled youth Highfields was serving had to be sent elsewhere, even home. Highfields had to trim its services with the loss of state and county contracts.

The very future of the center was in doubt.

Highfields took action. It admitted to problems. It sought out new leadership to restore the confidence of clients. And, last week, a state official praised the center for imposing new requirements on staffing, training and reporting incidents.

Ingham County Probate Judge George Economy said last Friday that Highfields has not yet met with county judges to discuss changes, a prerequisite to any return of county charges to

the center. "I expect that (meeting) will occur sooner rather than later," Economy said.

Good.

People clearly were hurt by the disruption of Highfields services. The unfortunate thing wasn't that problems were reported and confirmed and led to state and local withdrawals; it is that problems occurred in the first place.

Local and state officials deserve credit for taking action to protect their charges. Highfields leadership deserves credit for embracing change in a way essential to restoring the trust it must have to operate.

We look forward to the day when Highfields is back to full, normal operation - and the public can be confident its children are in safe hands.

EDITOR'S NOTE: LSJ Editorial Page Editor Mark Nixon is a member of the Highfields board.

To avoid a conflict of interest, Nixon has recused himself from Highfields board meetings and from LSJ Editorial Board work on the issue.

DETROIT

Boy, 15, charged in homeless death

May 22, 2006

BY JACK KRESNAK
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

A 15-year-old boy has been charged as a juvenile in the shooting death of a homeless man during an altercation in March.

The boy is charged with first-degree murder and using a firearm while committing a felony in connection with the March 26 assault on Braymond Harris. Police describe the 21-year-old man as homeless.

The case has been likened to incidents this year in Florida when teenage boys were charged with beating homeless men for kicks. One victim died and videotapes of the incidents made national news.

A police report filed in the juvenile division of Wayne County Family Court said Harris got into an argument about 7:15 p.m. with three or four teenagers near a store on Fenkell at Wyoming.

Harris ran across the street pursued by the 15-year-old.

The boy shot Harris in the head with a small-caliber handgun in the parking lot of a McDonald's, said Detroit Police Homicide Sgt. Michael Martel.

The 15-year-old was among the boys identified as possible suspects by witnesses, but officers could not find him.

Police found him May 15 when detectives called his mother's cell phone and learned he was with her in 36th District Court, where officers arrested him.

"I wish there was a motive like robbery," Martel said. "At least I could understand it. But they just wanted to beat up a bum."

Contact JACK KRESNAK at 313-223-4544 or jkresnak@freepress.com.

Meth lab found in arrest

Grand Rapids Press

Monday, May 22, 2006

PLAINFIELD TOWNSHIP -- A 16-year-old male in possession of meth lab supplies, marijuana and swords was arrested Saturday and lodged in juvenile detention after fleeing a Kent County sheriff's deputy who attempted to pull him over for speeding on Plainfield Avenue NE near Coit Avenue about 1:10 p.m. The teen drove down Coit and into a neighborhood west of Jupiter Avenue bridge before fleeing on foot. Police caught him and found marijuana on him. The swords and mobile meth lab components were found during a search of the vehicle, police said.

Aunt is committing elder abuse

Dear Annie: My 91-year-old grandfather wants to live in the nursing home where my sister works. He was in the home briefly once before, and liked it very much.

Grandpa has Parkinson's and needs regular care. The problem is, my aunt doesn't think Grandpa can afford to live in the nursing home.

When "Aunt May" took Grandpa out of the home last time, my brother told her he could no longer be responsible for Grandpa during the late night hours (he's been doing it for five years), and that Aunt May would have to take that shift.

The first few nights were not too bad, but then Grandpa began to call at all hours, so Aunt May unplugged her phone.

When he couldn't reach her, Grandpa pushed his Lifeline button. The sheriff arrived at 4 a.m., and Grandpa told him he was fine, he just needed a glass of water that he couldn't reach and was worried that his daughter was not answering her phone. The sheriff headed over to Aunt May's house and told her not to unplug her phone again.

Aunt May's solution was to move Grandpa's phone out of his reach and take away his Lifeline



KATHY
MITCHELL
AND
MARCY SUGAR
Annie's Mailbox

call the Eldercare Locator in your area (www.eldercare.gov) at (800) 677-1116, and find out what resources are available for Grandpa. Don't wait.

button.

A few weeks ago, the home health provider rushed over to my brother's house because Grandpa had fallen. Since he could reach neither the phone nor the Lifeline button, he lay on the floor for nearly five hours.

I hate the way Aunt May is treating Grandpa, but she has control over his money and is determined to keep him at home. I don't understand why. Whose money is she trying to save?

— **Worried Granddaughter**

Dear Granddaughter: She may be trying to save her inheritance. Or, she may truly believe that Grandpa is better off at home, which might be true if he had adequate, round-the-clock care.

Preventing Grandpa from calling for assistance is a form of elder abuse. Does Aunt May have siblings or friends who have influence over her and whom you can enlist to help? You also can

Michiganders struggle to pay heating bills

May 22, 2006

BY ALEJANDRO BODIPO-MEMBA
FREE PRESS BUSINESS WRITER

A growing number of Michigan families are struggling to pay their utility bills, with 15% saying they've even had to borrow money, according to a statewide survey released today.

That's not a surprise to Elizabeth Salenik, who sought help from charities to stay on top of her heating bills.

The 36-year-old mother of four from Eastpointe got an accumulated gas bill for \$1,265.37 in April. She and her husband, Michael, earned \$21,888 last year. Cash-strapped and between jobs, Salenik said she often must ride her bicycle to buy groceries because she can't afford gasoline for her family's car.

"I don't know how they expect people to make it like this," Salenik said earlier this month. Her gas was shut off in April. "And it's not just us. Our neighbors don't know how they are going to pay their bills."

In an exclusive for the Free Press, a survey conducted by EPIC-MRA and the Heat and Warmth Fund (THAW) found that rising energy costs are having a big impact on budgets in Michigan.

"The energy crisis in Michigan is here to stay," Ed Sarpolus of EPIC-MRA, a Lansing-based polling firm, said Friday. "If you're borrowing from Peter to pay your heating bills in the winter, and you're a family with kids, it will be doubly difficult to pay to cool your home when you have a really hot summer."

The statewide telephone survey of 800 Michigan households, conducted May 1-8, found that 29% of Michigan families identified rising utility bills as a "major problem."

The study, which has a margin of error of plus or minus 3.5 percentage points, also found that 24% of Michiganders were on some kind of payment plan with their utility company that includes both bill-paying and budgeting assistance. An additional 15% of respondents said they had borrowed money this year to pay their energy bills.

The statistics are a clear indication that Michigan household budgets are getting tighter as energy costs increase.

In fact, MichCon, the natural gas unit of DTE Energy Corp., said it had a 10% increase in the number of customers requesting to be put on the company's BudgetWise billing program compared with last December.

CMS Energy Corp.'s Consumers Energy unit said it saw a similar increase in customers enrolling in its Winter Protection program. MichCon serves 1.2 million customers; Consumers Energy serves about 1.7 million.

Despite a relatively mild winter, Michigan households saw the costs of natural gas jump as much as 59%, compared with a year earlier. A typical MichCon residential customer spent about \$1,180 for home heating from November to March. Typical Consumers Energy customers paid an average of \$790 for natural gas during that period.

A new concern: Keeping cool

For Nancy Taylor, who was barely able to keep the gas and lights on in her family's home this winter because of energy costs, the new concern is how she's going to keep her home cool this summer.

Taylor, 31, of Roseville, who has a husband and four children, received an electric bill of \$1,442.50 for November, December and January.

With a household income of less than \$30,000 a year -- and she was recently laid off from her job as a grocery store cashier -- Taylor and her family quickly fell behind on their bills and had to get help. That's when she went to the Macomb County Community Service Agency in Warren.

"It's not easy asking for help," Taylor said. "But there are times when you have no other choice."

The Macomb County Community Service Agency, which helps needy families and senior citizens with many things -- including finding money to pay delinquent utility bills -- said it has seen monthly requests for assistance jump from around 300 inquiries during the previous winter to more than 500. But money is limited. The EPIC-MRA survey reports nearly half of all people who sought assistance in paying their utility bills last winter were turned away for reasons that included income-level limitations.

"Most of our agencies are out of funds," said Kathleen Walgren, executive director of THAW. "I think Michigan residents got off lucky this past winter. If we have a really hot summer, we could be looking at a disaster the likes of which happened in Chicago a few years ago."

In that city in 1995, 628 people died during a heat wave.

Sorting through bureaucracies to get help is not easy.

Nancy Taylor said she contacted the Michigan Department of Human Services after she got a shutoff notice in April. Three days after putting her name on the list for assistance, she said, she received a letter saying she qualified for a \$200 grant to help pay off the balance of her electric bill. That's when she was referred to the Macomb County Community Service Agency. The entire process took about a week to complete, she said.

"The increase in the electric bills we're seeing is unreal," said Julie Gobbell, a field worker at the agency. "We're especially concerned about families with small children and seniors."

The Michigan Public Service Commission, which published a Michigan Energy appraisal study last month, suggests that demand for electricity and natural gas is expected to increase modestly under normal weather conditions. But all bets are off if Michigan has a string of 90-degree days this summer, or if the gulf coast region is hit with another series of hurricanes. Michigan receives much of the natural gas it consumes from the gulf coast region.

"We're really concerned about next year," Walgren said. "Storms in the gulf could happen next year, and we could get a normal cold winter, which means higher prices. It's kind of like Katrina without the levees: You know something's going to happen."

Contact ALEJANDRO BODIPO-MEMBA at 313-222-5008 or abodipo@freepress.com.

HOW YOU CAN SAVE ON ENERGY COSTS

-
- **Insulate now:** Spring and early summer are the best times to insulate your home. Costs are discounted, and crews prefer to work in cooler temperatures.

-
- **Take a class:** Big retailers like Home Depot and Lowe's offer classes on energy efficiency.

-
- **Shop discounts:** Local hardware stores now have winter-related merchandise marked down.

-
- **Make repairs:** Have a professional heating and cooling specialist inspect your air-conditioning unit to make sure it is working properly. Remember to clean or replace filters monthly.

-
- **Buy smart:** Be sure your new central air system has a Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ratio (SEER) of 12 or higher. SEER is a measure of equipment energy efficiency over the cooling season.

- **Let nature cool you:** Cut your air-conditioning load and reduce pollution by planting leafy trees and vines around your home and installing reflective tiles on your roof.

- **Get the tax break:** Remember, you can claim the Home Energy Efficiency Improvement Tax credit of up to \$500 by installing energy-efficient products such as windows, doors, and heating and cooling equipment. Energy-efficient Energy Star-approved appliances qualify for the tax break.

- **Seek help:** Low-income residents and people facing a financial crisis can call the Heat and Warmth Fund (THAW) for emergency payment assistance.

Residents in southeastern Michigan can call the United Way hotline 211. In Muskegon County, the Red Cross emergency line is 231-726-3555. All other areas in Michigan can call THAW at 800-866-8429.

Sources: U.S. Department of Energy; www.eere.energy.gov; www.energystar.gov; www.michigan.gov; www.thawfund.org.

A penny for your lights

FLINT JOURNAL LETTER TO THE EDITOR

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Monday, May 22, 2006

JOURNAL READER

How utterly shameful that an individual has their electricity shut off over one cent. The company spokesperson said "they had no choice in the matter."

But they could have forgiven the penny or, gee, I don't know, maybe an executive could have donated a penny.

How awful there is so little charity shown to those less fortunate in Michigan. Next time, let me know and I'll pay the penny.

Maureen Boutwell

Ozark, Ala.

[<<Back](#)

Grand Traverse County

More Child Care Options For Low Income Families in Grand Traverse County

More parents in a Grand Traverse County community will have a daycare option that offers some financial help. The new Angel Care Day Care Center in Traverse City is a collective effort of the Father Fred Foundation, St. Michael's church and the Angel Foundation. It's mission is to help all families--including those who might not otherwise be able to afford it. The new building has let the program expand from a dozen kids to 37. The director says they now have room for at least a 12 more.



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Published May 22, 2006

Domestic issues fill up court docket: Judges see shift in society, want to see solutions

By Stacey Range
Lansing State Journal

She's been in court less than half an hour, and it's already been a busy morning for Ingham County Circuit Court Judge Laura Baird.

Among the cases on her docket Thursday morning, the Family Division judge agreed to let a grandmother in Arkansas keep temporary custody of her grandkids, accepted a plea from a Lansing mom who admitted skipping required drug tests and told another mom that she can avoid a trial to suspend custody of her kids if she has a clean urine test.

It's quite a change from Baird's days as a family lawyer in the 1980s.

"There weren't this many cases," she said. "Obviously, there's been a shift in society."

That shift is evident in the legal venue. Once reserved mainly for criminal and civil trials, dockets now are consumed by domestic issues, such as divorce, child support and paternity.

In fact, family law cases accounted for two-thirds of all new case filings in Michigan's circuit courts last year - a trend that's persisted since the mid-1990s, stressing courts and leaving some in the field to wonder whether the courts ought to take a more active role in finding solutions.

"Our judicial system is changing before our very eyes," said Judge William Whitbeck, chief judge of the Michigan Court of Appeals.

"The family as we have traditionally known it has changed

extraordinarily, and we're seeing the impact in our courts."

But the data does more than provide a mirror to today's dysfunctional family society. Michigan Supreme Court Justice Maura Corrigan says it also should sound an alarm to where society is headed.

"Child abuse, drug abuse, gang violence. It says amazing things about our future, and we need to do something or we're going to continue to expand the cycle of poverty and disadvantage," Corrigan said.

If not only for the costs to taxpayers both in immediate court costs and with associated costs of welfare, incarceration and substance abuse, Corrigan said something needs to be done to reverse the trend.

She'd like to launch a pilot project in the next year or two creating a specialty court dealing with child support issues. The court, modeled after one in Raleigh, N.C., would be similar to Michigan's drug courts in that it would offer services and aim to find solutions rather than simply issuing punishments.

"We're the ones with our fingers in the dike," Corrigan said. "This is a massive problem, and things need to be done beyond the courts to get at the issues we're facing."

Corrigan, who serves on a national task force on child support, points to the one million open support cases in Michigan now and the nearly \$9 billion in uncollected funds owed to Michigan children.

Putting non-paying parents in jail where they can't earn money and end up costing society more doesn't always make sense, she said.

North Carolina's court instead uses electric tethers to monitor violators who can keep working to pay support. The court also works with violators on some of the underlying causes of non-payment by helping them with substance abuse problems, job training and educational needs.

Two judges in Wayne County and Flint already have volunteered to preside over the project courts, Corrigan said.

Human Services advocate Sharon Claytor Peters supports the idea of a new specialty court utilizing partnerships between the judicial system,

public agencies and community organizations.

"Societal factors indicate this trend will only grow," said Claytor Peters, president and chief executive officer of Michigan's Children.
"We won't achieve solutions without the courts' involvement. They see the problems first."

Contact Stacey Range at 377-1157 or srange@lsj.com.

Michigan Report

May 19, 2006

WELFARE CASELOADS HOLD TREND

For the third month in a row, families receiving cash assistance from the state decreased, while the number of families who received Food Assistance Program aid rose for the seventh consecutive month, according to reports from the Department of Human Services.

The Family Independence Program had 78,198 case in April, down from 78,238 cases in March and 78,889 cases in February. The caseloads represented 211,135 people, down from 211,235 people in March and 213,313 persons in February.

In April there were 514,262 families receiving Food Assistance Program benefits, compared to March there were 512,000. That compares with 508,552 families in February, 506,506 in January, 502,981 in December, 498,935 in November and 497,814 in October.

Childcare cases saw a sharp decline in April to 60,891 families from 64,685 in March. The April caseload represented 114,612 children.

Earned income cases dropped back to 33 percent from the 34 percent of those required to find work reporting income recorded in March, which had represented a one-month jump from the prior three months. The percent of cases exceeding the federal 60-month limit has also held steady at about 13 percent since October.